



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

SOME IMPRESSIONS OF MY ELDERS

BY ST. JOHN ERVINE

GEORGE MOORE

I

I WAS in Dublin on the day when the news of the Battle of Jutland was announced in such abrupt terms that most people imagined the British Fleet had been irretrievably defeated. The affairs of the Abbey Theatre, of which I was then in control, had been brought to a pause because of the military regulations imposed upon the city after the Easter Rising, and Mr. Moore, new from London, asked me to employ some of my leisure in making a reconciliation between Lady Gregory and Mr. Yeats on the one hand and himself on the other. I foolishly consented to see what could be done, chiefly because of the innocent wonder which I detected in Mr. Moore at the fact that anyone could possibly take offense at anything he might say, however revelatory of private affairs it might be; and I spent some time in the pursuit of peace. Lady Gregory declared that she had no feeling against Mr. Moore because of what he had said about her in his trilogy, *Hail and Farewell*, but that she could never forgive the insults it contained to Mr. Yeats. Mr. Yeats, endeavoring to think deeply about the Rising, declared that he had forgotten, if indeed he had ever remembered, the insults to himself in the trilogy, but that he could not pardon those offered to Lady Gregory. Moore had broken bread in her house, and then had gone away and made fun of her! Worse than that, he had belittled her work. He had said that her plays were not great plays and that her "Kiltartan" dialect was not the dialect of the people of Ireland, but a tortured, unrhythmic invention of her own! . . . I proposed to them that they should pool their pardons and receive him into the fold again, but my proposal

was not accepted, and so I set off from Lady Gregory's lodgings in Dublin to tell Mr. Moore, staying in the Shelbourne Hotel, of the failure of my mission. On the way, I encountered newspaper boys, carrying placards on which was printed the news of the Battle of Jutland. When I got to the hotel and was shown into Mr. Moore's private sitting-room, I found assembled there, Mr. Moore, white with anger and dismay, "A. E." (George W. Russell) "John Eglinton" (William Magee) and the late W. F. Bailey, a Land Commissioner, a Privy Councillor and a Trustee of the Abbey Theatre, who had the most extensive acquaintance of any man I have ever known. Mr. Moore was seated in the middle of the room, looking very like a portrait of himself, facing his friends, who were huddled together on a sofa in the shadow as if they were three misbehaving schoolboys receiving a severe rebuke from their master. I could not tell Mr. Moore at that moment of the result of my mission, and in the excitement of the subsequent argument I forgot to do so, but I doubt whether he was then in a mood to care whether he was forgiven or not.

II

It is nearly five years since that day when I heard Mr. Moore haranguing Mr. Russell and Mr. Magee and Mr. Bailey on the Battle of Jutland, but my recollection of the occasion is very vivid, partly because I have a good memory for things which interest me (and none at all for things in which I am not interested) but chiefly because it seemed to me that on that day Mr. Moore definitely became an old man. His age is not stated in the books of reference, for Mr. Moore is as reticent as an actress on this point, but he is older than Mr. Shaw, who is much older than Mr. Yeats or "A. E." It may seem singular that he, so destitute of reserve in other and more intimate matters, should be secretive on this, but I fancy that his failure to publish the number of his years is due less to vanity than to inability to believe that he is as old as they denote. Judged by the rules of arithmetic his age is—so much; but judged by his feelings, it is—much less. Facts are stubborn things, so we are told, demanding acceptance and unquestioned admission, but Mr. Moore

declines to accept the fact of time: he ignores it. But on the day on which the news of the Battle of Jutland was made public, the fact of time ceased to be ignorable, and Mr. Moore, for the first moment in his life, yielded to his years. He looked old and he talked as old men talk. There was a note of panic in his voice, of frightened urgency, and he complained bitterly of those who saw importance in a mean brawl in Dublin, but remained indifferent to an event which might result in the destruction of a desirable civilization. I doubt whether anything in the world had ever until that day been serious to Mr. Moore in the sense that loss and suffering and great grief are serious. I am certain that he never understood why people were angry with him because of *Hail and Farewell*. The resentment manifested against him by Lady Gregory and Mr. Yeats was to him incomprehensibly petty: the deeper resentment of other people, more grievously wounded by his revelations which they declared to be untrue, filled him with astonishment. The spectacle of life was so much of a spectacle to him that he could not conceive of it as anything else to others. He had made himself so completely, not a participant in affairs, but an observer of them, that he had lost the faculty of personal feeling. His interest in acts and motives was so intense that he could not understand anyone objecting to his prying into the more entertaining of their private relationships. Equally difficult was it for him to understand that they should deeply disrelish the idea of having their affairs, intimate and even secret, used as material for a book by Mr. Moore. Any human experience, particularly when narrated in Mr. Moore's exquisite literary style, is of value to mankind, and it must have seemed to him that there was something, not only absurd, but also disgraceful in the objection many people had to the publication of their private concerns. Had he not paid tribute to privacy by omitting names or inventing others than the proper ones? True, everyone knew who were the persons portrayed, but was that his fault? And since everyone knew already of the affairs, what possible harm could there be in his putting them into perfect and publishable prose? The objection raised by some persons that the incidents narrated by him as facts were pure inventions was frivolous! What was truth? Mr.

Moore, like jesting Pilate, asked the question, but did not wait for a reply. The three volumes which make up *Hail and Farewell* are remarkable and have much value, but it is necessary to remember that Mr. Moore has not always been careful in them to distinguish between the historian and the novelist, between the recorder and the inventor. There are many dull passages in the trilogy, especially those in which he relates his experiences with his kinsman, Mr. Edward Martyn, a charge which Mr. Moore would not deny, but, on the contrary, proudly admit, for he insists that dullness is a prominent feature of all great books. It is only the newspapers and ephemeral books which are interesting from beginning to end, he asserts—a statement which implies that Mr. Moore has been happier in his newspapers than the generality of people. In this matter of privacies, Mr. Moore was, and still is, the most complete and consistent of communists. He believes very thoroughly in private property, but he has no belief in private feelings. One imagined him, in the days before the Battle of Jutland, asking in a puzzled fashion, “What do you mean when you say you *feel* things? What *is* feeling? Why should it ever be *private*?” “This lady is in love with that gentleman who is not her husband! How interesting! I shall write a book about their love for each other. They may object! But why? Her husband’s feelings! . . . Now, isn’t that absurd!” And so on. Miss Susan Mitchell, in a very entertaining, but not entirely sympathetic book; entitled *George Moore*, declares that he seceded from the Roman Catholic Church because he objected to the secrecy of the confessional. His sins, he considered, were so absorbingly interesting that they ought to be publicly confessed rather than confided to an undivulging priest. The flaw in Miss Mitchell’s argument is her assumption that Mr. Moore had sins to confess rather than sins which he had invented! . . .

III

But on this day when the news of the Battle of Jutland was announced, Mr. Moore seemed, for the first time in his life, to realize that men and women do feel and suffer and bear loss; and

the discovery instantly aged him. The War which had so teasingly disturbed the amenities of Ebury Street became in a moment something more than an irritating scuffle in the dark—it became an immense disaster which might make amenities forever impossible. The solidities of life were in process of dissolution. Literary style amazingly mattered less than the power of the commonest guttersnipe to kill. Mr. Bernard Shaw, in the preface to *Heart-break House*, exclaims, “Imagine exulting in the death of Beethoven because Bill Sykes dealt him his death blow!” in a rebuke administered to the people who rejoiced in the news of appalling death-rolls among Germans during the War. But on the field itself, Beethoven and Bill Sykes cease to be Beethoven and Bill Sykes and become, each, a very frightened man with a rifle and bayonet and a strong desire to live. In that dreadful encounter, Bill Sykes would not be thinking to himself, “Here comes Beethoven, a great master of music, by whom it will be an honor to be killed!” but “’Ere comes a bloody ’Un who will kill me unless I kill ’im!” The perception of what was happening in Europe, of the horrible reduction of Beethovens to the level of Sykes, of Shakespeares to the level of Prussian drill-sergeants (for they had to come down to those levels if they were to have any hope of survival) made an old man of Mr. Moore. He threw up his hands and made submission to his years. I listened to him while he talked volubly and bitterly to “A. E.” and “John Eglington” and “Bill” Bailey, as people called him, and marvelled to find him displaying so much emotion over the naval disaster and its probable consequences. He had written a preface for his brother, Colonel Moore’s life of their father, in which he had romantically stated that George Henry Moore, his father, had committed suicide because his heart was broken by the dishonorable behavior of politicians. Colonel Moore printed the preface, but denied the statement about his father and withdrew his friendship from George. But George still clings romantically to the belief that his father killed himself. An English newspaper, *The Observer*, in its issue for Sunday, April 10, 1921, prints the preface which Mr. Moore has written for a new book to be published some time during this year. (Probably, when this article is printed, the book will have been published.) In this preface,

Mr. Moore very interestingly describes the way in which he was educated, and in the course of it occurs this paragraph:

He was unhappy in the strife, for he loved his father; his father was always, and still is, the intimate and abiding reality of his life, and the evening that his father started for Ireland for the last time is quick among his memories. George's father returned from the front door to bid his son good-bye, and in obedience to a sudden impulse he took a sovereign out of his pocket and put it into the boy's hand, and went away to his death resolute, for he had come to see that his death was the only way to escape from his embarrassments, without injury to his family, and I can imagine him walking about the lake shores bidding them good-bye for ever.

I suppose that if George Henry Moore were to rise from the grave and deny that he had died by his own hand, his son and heir, George, would murmur aggrievedly, "You know, father, you are spoiling a very charming story! . . ." He is still sufficiently insensitive not to understand that life is something more than material for the story-teller's art—he may, perhaps, have relapsed from the state of understanding to which the Battle of Jutland brought him,—but for that time, at all events until the news of the Battle was amended, George Moore knew what private feelings were, even although he could not keep them to himself. "A. E.," looking woolly and worried, seemed to be completely deprived of his powers of speech by Mr. Moore's angry rhetoric. "John Eglinton," a scholarly essayist and the sanest man in Dublin, having much respect for, but no delusions about, the ancient Gaelic literature of which we hear so much and see so little, remained customarily mum. Mr. Bailey, nervously garrulous as a rule, uttered jerky, but inarticulate, sounds to which Mr. Moore paid absolutely no heed. I discreetly sat in a corner and did not make a sound. The words flowed steadily from Mr. Moore's lips—hot denunciation of the Rising, contemptuous references to Kuno Meyer, rebukes for "A. E." (discovered to have flaws) and a tremendous indictment of German culture, with a proviso in favor of German music, together with admiring references to France, to French literature and to the French Impressionists, particularly Manet. A waiter intruded into the room for some purpose and was ordered out again.

. . .

IV

Of all that Mr. Moore said on that extraordinary occasion, I remember most his sudden outburst into what he called practical politics. He demanded the impeachment of Mr. Asquith, the restoration of the Coronation Oath and the abolition of all dogs! The comic incongruity of those three items in a plan to win the war was apparent neither to him nor to his three elderly auditors, or so it seemed, and I deemed it wise to control my laughter. Mr. Moore declared that Mr. Asquith's inertia, of which we were hearing so much then, was certain to bring defeat to the Allies.

As for dogs, these abominable animals, he said, are nuisances at any time, but during a war and period of food shortage, they are a positive menace to the country. He begged us to consider (a) the great quantity of food that was consumed by dogs, (b) the amount of nervous irritability brought about by their incessant yapping, and (c) the defilement of the streets caused by them. He threatened us with famine, insanity and, finally, plague. There is an English poet who is also a great breeder of bulldogs. Whenever he reads one of Mr. Moore's periodical denunciations, he becomes so enraged that only the strongest efforts of his friends prevent him from emptying the contents of his kennels on to Mr. Moore's doorstep that they may there do their worst. The ambition of his life is to see one of his bulldogs fasten its teeth firmly in the calf of Mr. Moore's venerable leg. . . .

V

All that has been written here so far will seem to support the superstition that Mr. Moore is a trifler with life, that he is a man destitute of serious purpose; but I am anxious to make plain to my readers that this superstition is a superstition. His lack of reticence about his own and other people's affairs and his perverse incursions into what he imagines to be practical politics are obviously responsible for the belief that he is what is called "a typical Irishman," that is to say, a man without a sense of responsibility. My experience is that "typical Irishmen" are

generally discovered to be Englishmen or Welshmen or New York East Side Jews—the late Padraic Pearse, Mr. Arthur Griffith and Mr. de Valera closely correspond to those descriptions—but it is undeniable that Mr. Moore, not without deliberation, has helped to maintain the legend that Irishmen are without a sense of responsibility. When, for example, during one of the many Home Rule crises, he suggested that the trouble between the two islands of Great Britain and Ireland might easily be settled by intelligent engineers, many persons were of the opinion that a man who could talk such twaddle, as they called it, in a time of much difficulty ought to be imprisoned. The proposal, when the details were disclosed, confirmed pessimists in their profound belief that the unsurmountable obstacle to the solution of Irish affairs is the Irish themselves! What Mr. Moore suggested was this: that a thick wall should be built across the North Channel between the Giant's Causeway and the Mull of Kintyre, and that another thick wall should be built across St. George's Channel between Carnsore Point and St. David's Head. These operations completed, the engineers should then pump out all the water in the Irish Sea, fill in the resultant gap with earth, and make one island out of two! He seemed not to have considered the case of Liverpool. What, someone jestingly demanded, would become of that great port when deprived of its "pool"? What also, he might have added, would become of Belfast and Dublin, deprived, the one of its Lough, and the other, of its Bay? Mr. Moore might have retorted that what Ireland lost on Belfast Lough it would more than gain on Galway Bay, but he preferred to remain silent. One could, of course, draw a conclusion, packed with thought and judgment, from Mr. Moore's playful proposal, and I do not doubt that such was his intention; but the average person is either too busy or disinclined to draw such conclusions from anything; and so, having glanced casually at the details of Mr. Moore's plan to settle the Irish Question, he turned impatiently away, convinced (a) that Mr. Moore was an incorrigible buffoon, and (b) that the government of Ireland must ever remain an unsolved problem because of the Irish people's amazing inability to conduct themselves reasonably!

But Mr. Moore has a serious purpose in life, and he pursues

that serious purpose with indefatigable industry. The immediate and unmistakable fact about him is that he is an artist. There are few writers in English, not even excepting Mr. Conrad, who have so much power over words as is possessed by George Moore, and this power has been achieved, as all power is achieved, by incessant labor and the most pure devotion. He is, in the real sense, a self-made man. The artistry that is undeniably his has been wrought not only in the sweat of his brain, but in face of powerful obstacles. His position as the heir of a fairly well-to-do landowner in Ireland might have resulted in him becoming a minor poet, publishing tiny verses in tiny volumes, or a small author of fragile essays about butterflies and pierrots. He did, in fact, begin his writing career, as most reputable writers do, by composing poems, but he speedily turned to prose. He actually published verses in books entitled *Flowers of Passion*—a name which incongruously suggests Baudelaire and Ella Wheeler Wilcox—and *Pagan Poems*, but, so far as I have been able to discover, no one has ever seen these books or read the poems contained in them. The first was published in 1877 and the second in 1881 and we may conclude that they have been dissolved by the chemicals of time. Miss Mitchell, in the book to which reference has already been made, states that “nobody in Ireland has ever seen any of Mr. Moore’s paintings except ‘A. E.’ to whom he once shyly showed a head, remarking that it had some ‘quality.’ ‘A. E.’ remained silent.” The poems remain under the same kindly condemnation. The favorable fortune which might have made a minor poet, and nothing but a minor poet, out of Mr. Moore was one of the powerful obstacles to his becoming a master of prose.

The other was the attempt made by his father to influence his mind. In the preface to a forthcoming book, from which I have already made a brief quotation, he gives an account of his education at the Roman Catholic school of Oscott. George, it seemed, had a reticence in his childhood which he remarkably lost in maturity: he refused to confess his sins on the singular ground that he had not got any sins to confess. He had not then learned, seemingly, that he who has not got any sins to confess, can easily invent a few. The story of this episode is fully nar-

rated in *Hail and Farewell*, but in the new preface Mr. Moore summarizes it and tells how his father was summoned to Oscott by the president of the school "to inquire into his son's lack of belief in priests and their sacraments." The upshot of the business was that the boy, 'not only the last boy in his class, but in the last class in the school—in a word, the dunce of the school' was removed from Oscott for private instruction at home in Mayo. "George's case is really very alarming," the president wrote to his father, and the letter contained the admission that he did not know whether George could not or would not learn.

It is exceedingly illuminating to observe how his prose style has grown through a series of very diverse books into its present condition. One of his most remarkable novels, as it is also one of his earliest, *A Mummer's Wife*, was clearly written under the influence of Zola, but with such individual quality that Zola might profitably have taken lessons from his pupil. The difference between Emile Zola and George Moore is that while Zola never forgot to be a doctrinaire, Moore never forgot to be an artist. *A Mummer's Wife* was unaccountably banned by the circulating libraries in England, and, such is the conservatism of these remarkable institutions, that I believe the ban is still maintained, although a generation has arisen which regards such books as this as very restrained indeed. The style in which it is written is somewhat arid, and the reader is not carried forward by the flow of the story itself, but is forced along by its weight. A comparison between this novel, or *Esther Waters*, and such later books as *The Lake* or *The Brook Kerith* reveals such a difference in manner that the critic has some difficulty in believing that all four novels came from the mind of the same author. Mr. Wells is a writer with many manners, but the reader can discover a unifying characteristic, unmistakably Wellsian, in all of them. Mr. Shaw, a more consistent author than most men of his quality, has kept so closely to one level that the difference between his earliest, his best and his latest work is merely the difference of degree between growing powers, highest powers and declining powers. The style in the novels, *Love Among the Artists*, *The Unsocial Socialist*, *The Irrational Knot* and *Cashel Byron's Profession* is the same style, under less control, as the style of *Man*

and *Superman*, *John Bull's Other Island* and *Heartbreak House*. But in Mr. Moore's case the style of *A Mummer's Wife* has no obvious relationship to that of *The Lake* or *The Brook Kerith*. The difference between the earlier books and the later ones is the difference between the flow of a river through a canal and the flow of a river through its natural bed.

VI

A Mummer's Wife is a powerful story, told in a skillful and impressive fashion, but it leaves the reader less conscious of life than of mechanics. As a piece of construction it is a better novel than *The Brook Kerith*, but as a piece of literature it is not. The quality of life is dusty and arranged in the early book, but it is alert and vibrant and natural in the later one. One notable feature of *A Mummer's Wife* is the display of knowledge by Mr. Moore of things and of places with which one would not expect him to be familiar. His acquaintance with grooms and horse-racing, manifested in *Esther Waters*, is understandable in a man who was reared in a country-house where the language of the stable must have been familiar. But how did Mr. Moore obtain his intimacy with the interior of a small draper's and milliner's shop in one of the Five Towns in Staffordshire, together with his knowledge of the details of life lived by a touring theatrical company? Mr. Arnold Bennett's knowledge of the Five Towns and the interior of a small shop is explained by the fact that he was born in such circumstances in one of the Five Towns. Mr. Leonard Merrick's intimate knowledge of the life of a travelling theatrical company is explained by the fact that he was once an actor in such a company. But how did Mr. Moore, the son of a prosperous Irish landowner of aristocratic origin, acquire his close intimacy with the details of such life? It is this aspect of the book which reveals the existence in Mr. Moore of a high faculty which was absent from the mind of his first master, Zola, the faculty of imagination. Zola made his novels out of things actually witnessed or learned from books, but Moore made his novels out of his own imagination. Zola could only write about life in a small shop in a small town after he had actually lived in

it, but Moore could write *A Mummer's Wife*, with no more knowledge of Hanley than a person passing through it might possess, yet has given his readers an impression of deep intimacy with it.

This book, notable in itself, had a notable result. It was read by a young writer, named Enoch Arnold Bennett, then engaged in journalism and the production of semi-sensational novels. Bennett was a native of "the Five Towns" district, born in a place called Shelton to the north-east of the town of Hanley which is the scene of *A Mummer's Wife*. Mr. Bennett himself told me that until he read *A Mummer's Wife* he never thought of writing about "the Five Towns." The Staffordshire people had no literary significance to him until that significance was revealed by *A Mummer's Wife*. Mr. Bennett probably exaggerates the extent of his debt to Mr. Moore. He would, sooner or later, have explored the rich mine from which he produced the ore of *The Old Wives' Tale* and *Clayhanger*—it is ludicrous to imagine that but for the happy accident of reading *A Mummer's Wife* he would never have done so—but it is not improbable that Mr. Moore's story brought him to his proper milieu earlier than he might otherwise have reached it. The reader can profitably entertain himself by comparing "the Five Towns," the places and the people, of *A Mummer's Wife* with "the Five Towns," places and people, of *The Old Wives' Tale* and *Clayhanger*. The difference between Mr. Moore's account and Mr. Bennett's is the difference between careful and acute observation by an intelligent stranger, alien in birth and tradition and training, and the knowledge, inherited from his forefathers and acquired in childhood and youth, of a native. Mr. Moore had to "mug up" his subject, as schoolboys say, but Mr. Bennett was born with most of it. The description of Hanley in the first chapter of *The Old Wives' Tale* (where it is named Hanbridge by Mr. Bennett) contrasts remarkably with the description of the same town in *A Mummer's Wife*, as does the description of a pottery seen through Mr. Bennett's eyes in *Leonora* with that of a pottery seen through Mr. Moore's eyes in the fourth chapter of *A Mummer's Wife*. These differences of description are, of course, the result of a difference in temperament between the two men which is perhaps most clearly revealed in the way in which they portray old women in their

books and deal with scenes of suffering. An intelligent reader of *A Mummer's Wife* and *The Old Wives' Tale*, having made allowance for the fact that the first-named was written by a young man beginning his career, and the second by a man approaching middle-age and the apex of his power, could draw up a fairly accurate statement of the character of each of the authors by comparing the figure of old Mrs. Ede in Mr. Moore's novel with that of old Mrs. Baines in Mr. Bennett's. The contrast between the scene of suffering pictured in the first chapter of *A Mummer's Wife* and that in the first chapter of *The Old Wives' Tale* would considerably assist him in making the statement. The painful insistence on the details of the asthma which afflicted Mr. Ede is in sharp opposition to the almost jocular fashion in which Mr. Povey's toothache is described. Both books end with the death of the principal figures. Kate Ede dies disquietly. One might say that Constance and Sophia Baines also die disquietly. But there is a difference in the disquiet. Constance and Sophia had had their share of disappointment and trouble and had lost their illusions, but at least they had had their fill of life, each as she desired it, and if there had been disappointment, also there had been satisfaction: the illusions were lost, but while they lasted they were agreeable. Kate died before she had had her fill of life, without illusions and, also, without agreeable memories. Youth insists that life is either very gay or very dismal—and *A Mummer's Wife* was written by a young man; but Maturity knows that the colors of life are mingled rather than uniform, and that even when the end is a dismal one, the journey to it has not been without its moments of fragrance and pleasure—and *The Old Wives' Tale* was written by a man in his maturity. The similarities between these two books are as interesting as their differences, and a close study of them leaves the reader at once aware of very dissimilar personalities and with enhanced respect for both of them.

VII

It is when we come to such novels as *The Lake* and *The Brook Kerith* that we discover Mr. Moore at his greatest. Zola is forgotten and only the strength of Mr. Moore himself is now dis-

played. *The Lake* is among the most beautiful stories of our time, a finely-conceived and finely-wrought book, more complete and unified than *The Brook Kerith*, which, in spite of much beauty and scholarship, is marred organically by a dispersal of the interest. The latter novel is in three sections, the first dealing with Joseph of Arimathea, the second with Jesus, and the third with Paul. Each of these sections by itself is well and even superbly done, although, in my judgment, the first of them is much the best of the three; but the interest which the reader has in any one of the three sections is not felt in the whole book because the three great figures are not grouped together. We begin with Joseph and then, at the point when we are absorbed in him, are hurried on to Jesus, undergoing a similar experience with Him when we are hurried off to Paul. The book is not a closely-knit drama in which the characters constantly act and re-act upon each other, but is more akin to three separate plays in which certain figures recur in greater or less positions. Mr. Moore, in short, was uncertain whether to make Joseph or Jesus or Paul the hero of his story, and he unwisely compromised by making each of them hero for a portion of it, with the result that each is of supreme importance for a third of the book and of subordinate importance for the remainder of it. *The Brook Kerith* is, nevertheless, a considerable achievement and is in itself sufficient to secure a high place in English letters for its author.

The legend is that Mr. Moore is a trifle with life, a man without purpose, immensely egotistical, having some of the simplicity of the buffoon. The truth is that he is an audacious, exceedingly adroit and utterly unthwartable artist who bends the visible world to his purpose of discovering and perfecting a desirable formula of words with which to express his vision of the invisible world. He has, indeed, a simplicity of character, but it is not the simplicity of the buffoon: it is the immense and dissolving simplicity of the man of genius.

ST. JOHN ERVINE,